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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CAMPAIGN TO OUST PRESIDENT CHEN, U.S. ARMS
PROCUREMENTS, CROSS-STRAIT TRADE

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies gave significant coverage September 8 to the prosecutors' secret questioning of President Chen Shui-bian and First Lady Wu Shu-chen in August, and former DPP Chairman Shih Ming-teh's campaign to oust President Chen, which will kick off tomorrow. The pro-unification "United Daily News" ran a front-page banner headline that said "Prosecutors: Bian and Chen Are 'Potential Defendants.'" The pro-status quo "China Times" also ran a banner headline on page two that read "Aware of, Authorized, and Assisted, Can Be Turned into Defendants at Any Moment; Bian, Chen Can Hardly Get Rid of Fact Were Accomplices to Forgery." With regard to the U.S. arms procurements, several papers reported on inside pages that KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou and Legislative Yuan President Wang Jin-pyng agreed Thursday that the U.S. arms procurement bill will be reviewed in the upcoming legislative session.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, criticized the campaign to oust President Chen, saying it will be heavy cost for Taiwan society. A "China Times" editorial, however, said the campaign is a result of the Taiwan people's constitutional right to tell Chen that they will no longer tolerate his corruption and disgraceful behavior. An opinion piece in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" discussed the arms deal of F-16C/D fighter jets, saying that Taiwan's inner polarities, stalemate, and political struggles over the past few years have completely exhausted the island's resources in building Taiwan-U.S. strategic relations. An editorial in the limited-circulation, conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" commented on cross-Straits trade relations, saying closer ties with China will contribute to stability in the Taiwan Strait and help to improve Taiwan's economy.
End summary.

¶3. Campaign to Oust President Chen

A) "Democratic Nations Should Not Have Violent and Intense Protests"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 600,000] editorialized (9/8):

"... The sit-in rally to oust Bian is about to kick off, and the stern atmosphere of confrontation will again prevail in Taiwan society. The general public will surely feel disturbed all the time under circumstances in which conflicts may easily break out at any moment. In particular, the fact that the leaders of the protests have repeatedly announced in a brutal language that they have no plans to back down also add unpredictable variables to the rally, and will surely create heavy costs for our society. Frankly speaking, Shih Ming-teh's campaign to oust Bian is part of the means

constantly adopted by the anti-Bian camp following the transfer of power in 2000; it is also an extension of the polarity between the Blue and Green camps in society. There is no need to underscore the historical significance of such a movement here. But for President Chen Shui-bian, who has been a ruler for over six years, he really needs to review and reflect on himself for his failure to eliminate the conflicts between different political parties and between different ethnic groups. ..."

B) "Let Taiwan's History Remember this September"

The pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (9/8):

"... Back to the question itself, this rally is [the result of] a constitutional right exercised by the people on their accord, and its objective is directly pinned on the corruption and disgraceful behavior of the state leader. The people may have used their votes to re-elect President Chen two years ago, but two years later, Chen's conduct proves that he is no longer suitable to stay on in his position. Given the DPP's obstruction, the people were not given an opportunity to vote Chen out. They could only choose to voice their outrage on Ketagalan Boulevard, where Chen goes to work every day, to let the president know that the people are no longer willing to stand idly by and tolerate Chen and his family's alleged involvement in all the corruption scandals concerning stocks, gift certificates, jewelry assets, and the special state affairs fund.
...

"We have always believed that it is the ruling party that should feel most worried. They should know that Chen has openly acknowledged that [his family] has accepted SOGO Department Store gift certificates and that other people's invoices and receipts were used to claim reimbursement from the Presidential Office's state affairs fund. The prosecutors have clearly indicated that Chen and the First Lady may 'very likely' have been involved in forgery and corruption, and suggested that they be accompanied by their lawyers. As the situation stands now, the DPP not only overlooked what is

happening but has also tried its best to side with Chen and conceal his faults. The only action the DPP took was to see Chen off and welcome him back at the airport en masse. The DPP's action indicated that the party is determined to put aside the core values they once embraced and has chosen to side with corruption, which Chen is involved in. Perhaps the DPP is anticipating that the rally to oust Bian will have a magnificent beginning but a poor finish, or that it will hardly sustain; or the party may also believe that Chen will survive eventually. There is such a possibility, but the DPP must be mentally prepared that should an unprecedented large crowd gather, its protest energy will be unprecedented, and the effect triggered by this rally in Taiwan and even in the international community will not be easily underestimated. ..."

14. U.S. Arms Procurements

"Use F-16 C/D Fighter Jets to Demonstrate [Taiwan's] Determination of Arms Procurements"

Mei Fu-hsing, director of the "Taiwan Defense Review," noted in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 500,000] (9/8):

"... Other complicated factors are also involved in the F-16s deal. The Bush administration reasoned that Taiwan has yet to make a final decision on the procurement of the weaponry package it agreed to sell to the island in 2001. Taiwan's internal political factors have constantly resulted in the stalling of the three major weapons deal. The United States, on the other hand, believes that over the past five years it has paid a high price for the deal in terms of its relations and commercial interests with Beijing. Washington is not willing to approve any other major arms deal before Taipei is sure of its procurement and guarantees it has the budget for such deals, so as to prevent triggering any pressure or retaliation from Beijing. Under such circumstances, to insist that the military get a formally approved quotation from the U.S. first is akin to the problem of which comes first, the chicken or the egg. Of course, this is also a posture deliberately made by the United States at the current stage in order to push Taiwan's ruling and opposition parties to handle the arms procurement bill as early as possible.

...

"The U.S. put out an indicator position of 'we'll talk after you have the money' with regard to its arms sales to Taiwan. Such a move has in reality indicated that Taiwan's major diplomatic achievement of having the arms procurements processed through a normal channel ... has become a hollow victory. The sadder fact is that within just five years, Taiwan's inner polarities, long-term stalemate, and political struggles have completely eroded the island's resources in building Taiwan-U.S. strategic relations."

15. Cross-Strait Trade

"Closer Ties with China Needed for Peace, Growth"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (9/8):

"There was recently a debate between the American Chamber of Commerce in Taipei (AmCham) and the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) about relations between Taiwan and mainland China. It was an interesting argument deserving attention from those concerned about the island's future. ... In our view, increased cross-strait trade relations can contribute to stability in the Taiwan Strait and lead to improvement in the Taiwan economy. The government's current restrictions on cross-strait trade have been impeding economic growth. Taiwan will be further isolated and marginalized if it shuts its doors to interaction with the fast-growing mainland market."

YOUNG